UN Meetings in the Context of COVID-19

Guidance for **organizers** holding meetings during the COVID-19 outbreak.

SECTION A – INSTRUCTIONS

The below document provides an overview of the following:

- Decision process for meeting risk assessment and decision tree flow chart (Section B)
- Information to gather on the meeting (Section C)
- Risk assessment tool (Section D)**
- Decision matrix that incorporates the risk assessment and mitigation measure scores (Section E)

In order to accurately provide answers for the Sections B-C, organizers must be knowledgeable on the current COVID-19 outbreak. The organizers should reference the daily global COVID-19 situation reports provided by WHO as well as the national COVID-19 situation reports, if available.

Section B supports the undertaking of a risk and criticality screening for meetings, which the Decision Tree puts into a visual flow chart.

The risk assessment tool (Section D) should only be used if it is determined that special risk management is needed under Section B and **must** be completed in the accompanying excel spread sheet as the scores are automatically calculated here. After the risk assessment and mitigation measures checklist (Section D) have been completed, the scores you receive in the excel spreadsheet for both sections will need to be inputted into the decision matrix (Section E) for the overall risk.

It is important to remember that while mitigation measures can reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections, they cannot completely eliminate the threat.

Decisions about any given event should take into account the epidemiological COVID-19 situation at the time the decision is made. The epidemiological situation is rapidly evolving and many uncertainties remain with respect to the dynamic of the transmission of COVID-19.

 As per any mass gathering event, risk assessment-related considerations outlined in the following document should be taken into account: Public health for mass gatherings: key considerations.

SECTION B – DECISION PROCESS FOR MEETING RISK ASSESSMENT AND DECISION TREE FLOWCHART

Guidance for **organizers** holding meetings or events during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For further advice contact the Occupational Safety and Health team of DHMOSH/DOS via osh@un.org.

Risk Screening
The first step in the application of the decision tree is to allocate a risk score. 1 point is allocated for each of the following questions

Criteria	Score
1. **Is there documented local transmission (community spread) in the host country?**	
2. **Will the event include in-person participants from outside of the host country?**	
3. **Will the event include in-person participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?**	
4. **Will the event include a large number of in-person participants at higher risk of severe disease (e.g., people > 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?**	
5. **Will the event be indoors with a high density of people in close contact with one another?**	
Total	

The meeting is considered high risk if the risk screening score amounts to 5. In this instance, the meeting risk cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level unless one of the key risk criteria is modified. Of the five criteria, there is potential to modify criteria 2 through 5 by either adjusting the participation, venue or mode (e.g., virtual meeting). For example, criteria 2 could be modified by excluding external participants, while criteria 5 could be modified by reducing the number of participants, thereby reducing the density.

To facilitate the process, the following questions could be considered:
1.   Could the meeting be limited to New York-based participants?
2.   Could the meeting be held virtually?
3.   Could the meeting be scaled down, postponed or cancelled. Postponement should consider availability of conferences services and financial implications.

Once the risk score is 4 or below, a criticality score becomes relevant. The criticality scale is as follows:

Criticality (of holding the event)
1. **Very critical - instances where the impact is imminent and could disrupt operations and critical areas of work, or is critical to ensure the safety of staff and premises.**
2. **Moderately critical – instances where it will take 1 – 2 years to recover from the impact of not holding the event, including meetings outcomes that would impact on other intergovernmental processes**
3. **Not critical – instances where there might be some short-term impacts if the event is not held, but those might be recoverable within a year**

If the meeting scores a criticality level of 3, it could only proceed if the risk score is 2 or less.
If the meeting scores a criticality level of 2, it could proceed if the risk score is 3 or less
If the meeting scores a criticality level of 1, it could proceed if the risk score is 4 AND the mitigation score is 76 or higher.

However, in instances of recording a criticality score of 3, it would be advisable to determine if it is absolutely necessary to proceed, together with the designated UN COVID-19 outbreak coordinator, with the event before performing the risk assessment. In some instances, it might be best to decide at this stage that the event could be canceled or postponed without performing a risk assessment and determining the mitigation score.

Risk →	1	2	3	4	5
Criticality↓					
1				Special risk Management	
2			Standard HQ Risk Management		
3					

The WHO risk assessment and mitigation measure (Section C-E) is to be used where special risk management is needed (risk score 4, criticality score 1 - orange box above). It is used to determine the mitigation score (%). Only mitigation scores of 50 or higher would allow a meeting to go ahead.

DECISION TREE

Meeting identified → **WHO Risk Scoring Process**
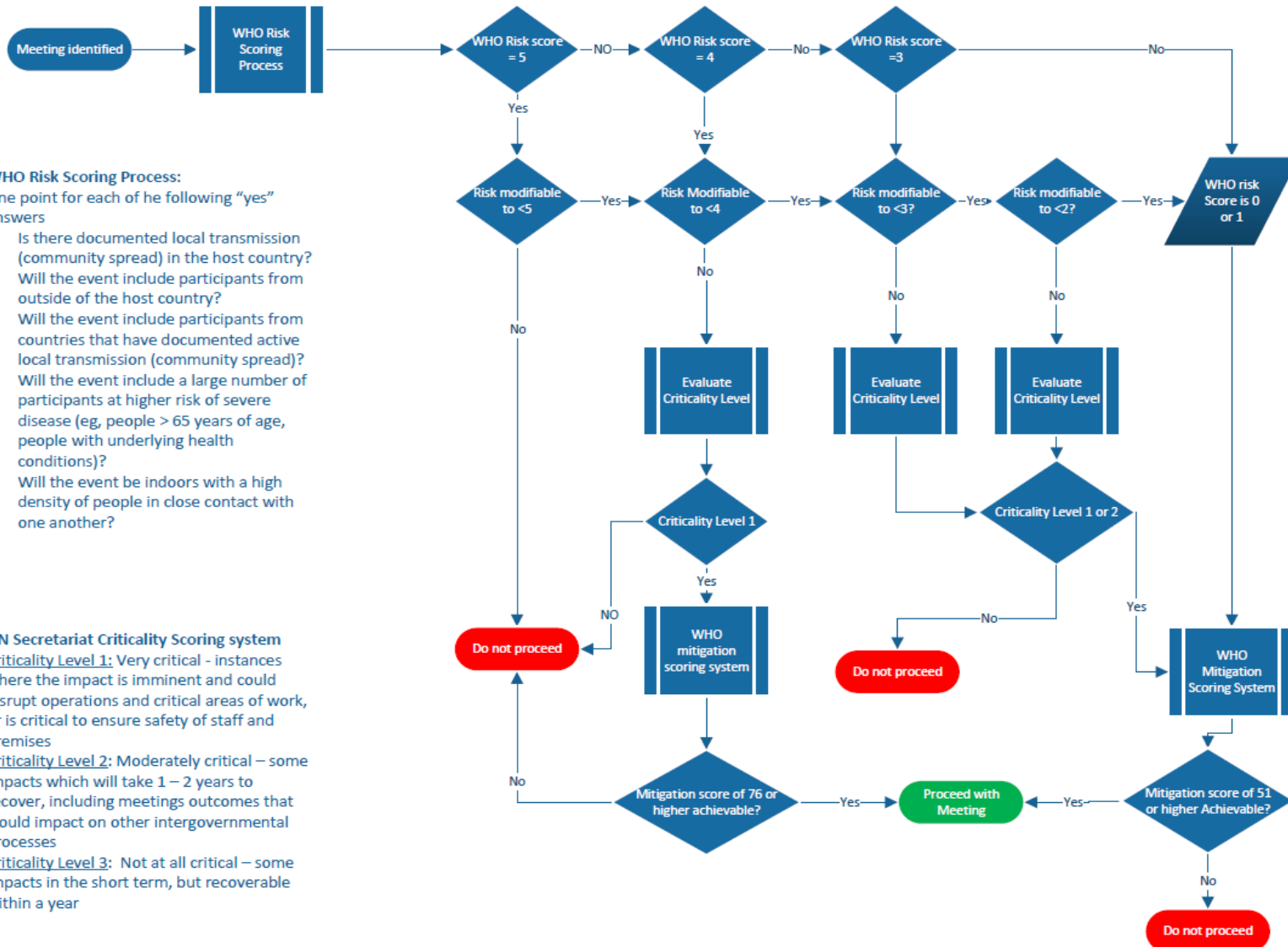
WHO Risk Scoring Process:
One point for each of he following "yes" answers
- Is there documented local transmission (community spread) in the host country?
- Will the event include participants from outside of the host country?
- Will the event include participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?
- Will the event include a large number of participants at higher risk of severe disease (eg, people > 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?
- Will the event be indoors with a high density of people in close contact with one another?

UN Secretariat Criticality Scoring system
Criticality Level 1: Very critical - instances where the impact is imminent and could disrupt operations and critical areas of work, or is critical to ensure safety of staff and premises
Criticality Level 2: Moderately critical – some impacts which will take 1 – 2 years to recover, including meetings outcomes that would impact on other intergovernmental processes
Criticality Level 3: Not at all critical – some impacts in the short term, but recoverable within a year
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WHO Risk score =5 —NO→ WHO Risk score = 4 —No→ WHO Risk score =3 —No→ WHO risk Score is 0 or 1

Yes ↓   Yes ↓   ↓

Risk modifiable to <5 —Yes→ Risk Modifiable to <4 —Yes→ Risk modifiable to <3? —Yes→ Risk modifiable to <2? —Yes→ WHO risk Score is 0 or 1

No   No   No   No

Evaluate Criticality Level   Evaluate Criticality Level   Evaluate Criticality Level

Criticality Level 1   Criticality Level 1 or 2

Yes   No

WHO mitigation scoring system   Do not proceed   WHO Mitigation Scoring System

Do not proceed

Mitigation score of 76 or higher achievable? —Yes→ Proceed with Meeting ←Yes— Mitigation score of 51 or higher Achievable?

No   No

Do not proceed

SECTION C – COLLECTION OF MEETING INFORMATION

To be completed by meeting organizer.

Name of event	
Sponsoring Office/Division/Department	
Contact person	
Dates (Start – Finish)	
Hosting City and Country	
Expected number of participants	
International participation	
Number of international participants traveling on G or A visas (exempt from full range of host nation screening requirements)	
The number of participants coming from countries or areas affected by the COVID-19 outbreak* within 14 days prior to the event	
Estimated percentage of participants over 70	
Estimated percentage of participants who are healthcare workers, potentially see COVID-19 patients or have had COVID-19 exposure	
Will there be Head of State / Head of Government / Ministerial or deputy ministerial involvement (number)?	
Have you coordinated with SSS (contact name, last contact)?	
Have you coordinated with FMS (contact name, last contact)?	
Which room(s) will you use and how full do you expect them to be?	
Will there be side events?	
Have you reviewed the 'Meeting guidelines for Organizers'?	
Have you distributed the 'Meeting guidelines for Participants'?	
Will the event be attended by registered and non-registered participants? If so, estimated percentage of each.	
What measures have you put in place to minimize close contact between participants?	
What measures have you put in place specifically regarding remote attendance by both participants and speakers?	
Briefly, what are the major impact(s) of postponement of the meeting (financial, operational, reputational etc)?	
Any other information relevant to the meeting that may affect the risk assessment	

*See WHO daily COVID-19 Situation Report for list of countries. Link: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/

SECTION D – RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The risk assessment tool will enable organizers to review the key considerations for hosting an event, and to inform them of their risk assessment of COVID-19 on the event. This will help organizers to understand and manage any additional risk from COVID-19.

This should be reviewed regularly during planning and updated immediately prior to the handover to the operational phase, especially in light of the rapidly evolving outbreak with reference to the updated guidance and situation reports on the WHO website.

The COVID-19 risk assessment for the event must be coordinated and integrated with the host country's national COVID-19 risk assessment and should include input from the local public health authority, along with consulting WHO's updated technical guidance and ensuring that there is an up-to-date evaluation of the epidemiological situation.

Mitigation measures assess the current effort and planning to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19. As mitigation measures can reduce the overall risk of the mass gathering contributing to the spread of COVID-19, they should be taken into account after the risk assessment has occurred to gain a clearer understanding of the situation. Together with the risk assessment score, the mitigation measure will contribute to the decision matrix and influence the mass gathering/event recommendations.

Mitigation measures cover a variety of topics including:

- Level of understanding of the current COVID-19 situation by meeting organizers
- Overview of the planned international event
- International Health Regulations (2005)
- Coordination with partners and stakeholders
- C4: command, control, coordination, and communication arrangements
- Risk and crisis communication
- Public information and health promotion
- Disease surveillance and outbreak response
- Infection prevention and control measures
- Event medical services
- Resource requirements

Use the accompanying excel spreadsheet to conduct the risk assessment and the mitigation measures checklist

SECTION E – FINAL DETERMINATION

The decision matrix takes the overall risk score and the overall mitigation score to provide a color-determination.

Risk Vs Mitigation Matrix

Total Risk Score	Very Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (76-100)	Somewhat Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (51-75)	Somewhat Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (26-50)	Very Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (0-25)
0 (negligible risk)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 &2 OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 &2 OK)
1 (Very Low Risk)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 &2 OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)
2 (Low risk)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (All levels OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 &2 OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)	Do not proceed with meeting
3 (moderate risk)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 &2 OK)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting
4 (high risk)	Evaluate criticality of meeting (1 only OK)	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting
5 (Very High risk)	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting	Do not proceed with meeting

As of (Date), based on

- the current stage of the outbreak and known transmission dynamics
- the geographic distribution, number of participants, and their individual risk profile
- risk assessment tool
- the mitigation measures currently in place or feasibly proposed

Recommendation: (overall score of risk assessment and mitigation measures)